DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 614 JC 850 277

TITLE	J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Narrative Report: Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program.
INSTITUTION	J. Sargeant Reynolds Community Coll., Richmond, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	[84]
NOTE	13p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Black Students; *College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; High Schools; *High School Students; Minority Groups; *Role Models; *Student Personnel Services; *Student Recruitment; Transfer Programs; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Urban Transfer Opportunities Program

ABSTRACT

An overview is provided of the activities and accomplishments of J. Sargeant Reynold Community College's (JSRCC) Urban Community Colleges Transfer Opportunities Program, which was designed to increase the number of minority students transferring to senior institutions. Introductory material highlights the means used to attain the program's objectives of encouraging inner-city high school students to enter JSRCC by using community college alumni as role models; and to build a support network of JSRCC alumni to assist current transfer-oriented students. Next, the report outlines outreach efforts to students in feeder high schools, including a presentation to high school business teachers and counselors at a fall in-service training workshop; the recruitment of alumni volunteers to assist in presentations to high school students; presentations to 10th grade students at seven high schools in Richmond, Virginia; and an evening meeting with potential college attendees to tour the campus and discuss in detail transfer programs, financial aid, and career options. A discussion of students' responses to these activities is followed by an overview of the college's efforts to build an alumni support network for potential transfer students. These activities included sending letters to the targeted student group, preparing counseling staff to support the project, establishing closer relations with university admissions staff, recruitment of volunteer alumni, and a transfer applications workshop. The final sections of the report compare the project's achievements with its original objectives; changes in the program, resource allocations, and staffing; and review plans to institutionalize the program at JSRCC. (HB)

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URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NARRATIVE REPORT

Richmond, Virginia

JC 850 277

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Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
Narrative Report

The Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College was designed to increase the number of minority students transferring to senior institutions by two means. First, by using community college alumni as role models, we sought to encourage inner-city high school students to enter transfer programs at J. Sargeant Reynolds. In addition, we set out to build a support network of JSR alumni to assist current students at the college contemplating transfer. The target groups to be involved in the project this year were students in the Richmond City public high schools not enrolled in college preparatory curricula, current J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College students enrolled in the business administration transfer curriculum on our Downtown Campus, alumni of the College's business administration program who had gone on to complete baccalaureate degrees, and alumni currently enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University (a large urban university located close to the community college's Downtown Campus.)

The response of each of these groups to our efforts has been remarkable. The degree of cooperation and participation we have encountered during the year has made us feel that we have opened a door that many, both within and outside of the College, had simply been waiting to have unlocked.

Achievements To Date

Primarily because of the time required to establish a grant-funded position in the Virginia Community College System, UCCTOP activities did not begin at J. Sargeant Reynolds as early as we had envisioned. The position of Alumni Transfer Coordinator, the primary staff position created with grant funds, was not filled until December 16. With the modifications described below, most

of the activities projected in the timetable of the original application have been completed. Some remain to be completed in June and over the course of the summer. For this reason, we do not consider this a final narrative report, but a statement of our progress to date.

Because of the relative inflexibility of the public high school schedule as compared to the rolling admissions policy of our target senior institution, and the mid-June ending date of our spring quarter, we focused our attention first on efforts to persuade high school students to consider transfer opportunities at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. These activities are virtually complete; it is the activities directed to establishing a transfer network which are not finished at the time of this report.

Outreach to Students in Feeder High Schools

The feeder high schools we chose to work with this year were those of the City of Richmond, a school system whose enrollment is 90% black. On the advice of school administrators, we worked with students in tenth-grade typing classes, because these classes typically enroll students who have not chosen college preparatory curricula but who still have time in their high school program to take the courses necessary to enter transfer programs once they reach the college level. (As indicated in our proposal, in 1980 only 26.8 percent of black high school seniors in Virginia were enrolled in college preparatory curricula.)

The cooperation of administrators of the Richmond City public schools, who had participated in the planning of our grant application, remained extraordinary through this phase of our program. Our first step in this project was to make a presentation to high school business teachers and counselors at their fall in-service training workshop. Dr. Henry Rhone, the Project Director, explained the transfer opportunities J. Sargeant Reynolds offers and the nature of

our UCCTOP plans. 35 teachers and 41 counselors participated in this session, which was the first to include a college speaker in the city's program of in-service training for teachers.

Assembling alumni volunteers to assist in presentations to high school students provided us with specific information about the advantages of J. Sargeant Reynolds' transfer programs from a student perspective. After writing former JSRCC students who had completed transfer programs and gone on to complete baccalaureate degrees, and publishing an article about the program in our alumni magazine, a meeting of potential alumni volunteers was held in late January. The 23 alumni who attended this initial meeting made a number of suggestions which were incorporated in presentations to high school students. In particular, they emphasized the necessity of a baccalaureate education to be competitive in the job market, the value of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College to them as a "stepping stone," and the extent to which the personal attention they received while students at the community college had made it possible for them to complete the foundation necessary for a four-year degree. Comments of several alumni were quoted verbatim in the brochure we prepared for distribution to high school students. The alumni who participated in this session were uniformly enthusiastic; every one of them volunteered to speak with high school students about the College's transfer opportunities, providing us with a more than ample supply of volunteers.

Beginning in February, the Alumni Transfer Coordinator, a faculty member from the College, and a series of alumni volunteers made presentations at the seven high schools in Richmond, speaking with 47 classes and a total of 498 students. This was the first time that representatives of any college had had the opportunity to speak to students in classes in the Richmond city school system.

The JSRCC alumni talked to these students like Dutch uncles, explaining the need for a full baccalaureate education in the course of describing their own college and job experience. The high school students themselves were remarkably responsive, asking pointed questions of our alumni speakers. As part of our effort to document the project, several of these sessions were video taped. On the brief questionnaire we asked students to complete at the time, 220 (45%) indicated an interest in learning more about the transfer opportunities the College affords.

Because of the publicity the program received within the College, in the local press, and our contact with the target senior institution, two additional speakers became involved in these presentations. A member of the College's Talent Search staff (a federal program providing tutoring for high school students interested in college enrollment) joined the team of speakers, as did a representative of the Virginia Commonwealth University admissions staff, who was able to provide additional information about transfer from the community college to that senior institution.

With the large number of students who had indicated an interest in further information about college transfer opportunities, our only disappointment was the small number (12) who attended a subsequent evening meeting at the College, to tour the campus and discuss in more detail the transfer programs, financial aid opportunities, and the career path these students might enter. Realizing now the difficulty of these students and their parents attending an evening meeting on the campus, in the future we will schedule this as an after-school actitity, and provide transportation.

The most tangible results of this phase of the program to date have appeared in the follow-up survey of high school students, just completed. With a response rate of 71% (355 students returning the survey), 95% found the in-class

presentations very useful or somewhat useful. Sixty-eight percent of the students indicate that they plan to pursue a college career following high school graduation, 50 of these planning to enter a transfer program at the community college and continue from there. The most exciting result of the survey to us is the fact that 56 students (16% of those returning the survey) indicate that they have or will change schedules to include additional college preparatory courses in their high school program as a result of the presentations made through this project.

As explained below, the College anticipates continuing this aspect of the project and has high hopes of its continued success. The high school counselors of all the surrounding county school systems were informed about the program at the College's area-wide articulation workshop this spring. City high school business teachers have been most enthusiastic about the presentations made in their classrooms, and we expect their support to continue. These teachers will complete a survey detailing their response to the program in June, and the results of this survey will be included in our final narrative report.

Alumni Support Network for Community College Students Contemplating Transfer

As explained above, our effort to build an alumni support network for current community college students contemplating transfer was the second phase of our program to be initiated. After identifying all potential transfer students enrolled in the Business Administration program on the Downtown Campus (the target group of students designated in the proposal), our first action was to write to each student, outlining forthcoming UCCTOP activities, and alerting these students to upcoming federal financial aid deadlines. At the initial meeting with these students in March, it was clear that they had a number of questions pertaining to the mechanics of transfer application as well as their best course in pursuing programs at the target senior institution.

To prepare the college counseling staff to support the project, the Activity Director (Dean of Students for the Downtown Campus), provided counselors with materials describing the UCCTOP plans, and conducted discussions of facilitating transfer at several staff meetings. The Alumni Transfer Coordinator responsible for the project has become a daily resource for these counselors, checking questions of the status of individual transfer applications and acceptance of transfer credits.

To establish a working relationship with the admissions staff of the target senior institution, through which such questions could be answered, our Alumni Transfer Coordinator's first task was to work with the university staff to identify both JSRCC alumni currently enrolled at the university, and current JSRCC students applying. (Before this time, we received this information only after a year had elapsed, and much of the information was self-reported.) The subsequent involvement of senior institution admissions staff has had a number of side benefits. Whereas in the past these admissions counselors had been on our campus only once a year as part of a general College Day, they have now become frequent visitors, participating in a number of UCCTOP activities.

While we had planned to contact our alumni on the university campus after this foundation had been prepared with counselors at the two institutions, the enthusiasm of our alumni preceded us. Several volunteered to assist students on the basis of the UCCTOP article in the alumni magazine, before they were ever approached for an initial meeting. The 19 alumni who attended an organizational meeting in March were most enthusiastic about working with JSRCC students, to help them overcome being "just a social security number in the crowd" on the university campus. They also provided us with valuable information about transfer problems they had encountered, particularly in the area of inconsistencies in the

acceptance of transfer credit. Members of this alumni group are currently considering draft by-laws to form their own on-campus chapter, and are making plans to host a meeting and tour of the university campus for current JSRCC students, this June.

Members of this alumni group as well as university admissions counselors and JSRCC administrators met with 35 of our students at a transfer applications workshop in April. The response of the current students to this workshop was very positive; they not only appreciated the advice of alumni, but also the hands-on assistance in completing financial aid and admissions applications. The admissions staff of the university felt the workshop to be so productive that they have planned additional workshops on our campus in the future, at which time they will be prepared to accept applications on the spot.

While we look forward to additional meetings between current students and alumni scheduled in June and over the summer, we have been extremely pleased with their interaction to date. We have also seen a substantial increase in applications for transfer to this target institution which we can only attribute to UCCTOP activities.

Comparisons of Achievements and Objectives

We feel that although our grant activities are not complete, both of our objectives have been substantially met. The objectives of the project outlined in the proposal were to use the assistance of alumni to:

1. Establish an outreach program for high school students, using role models to interest high school students in college transfer programs.
2. Establish an alumni support network for current JSRCC students who intend to transfer to the target senior institution.

As outlined above, we are delighted with the response to the high school outreach program, having completed presentations incorporating alumni speakers at all seven of the high schools in the City of Richmond. In our original proposal we identified the number of high school students who make schedule changes to incorporate additional college preparatory courses in their secondary school program as the primary measure of the attainment of this objective. We are therefore pleased that 56 students have indicated such changes as a result of our activities. Within this group, it is noteworthy that 26% of the high school students planning to enter JSRCC and then transfer reported such changes.

Similarly, while not all projected activities of the alumni support network have been completed, the network itself is well established. If anything, the enthusiasm of our transfer alumni is running ahead of our expectations of their participation. Our transferring students have likewise demonstrated considerable appreciation for their efforts, and look forward to upcoming meetings both here and on the target campus. In our original proposal we anticipated that the primary measure of the attainment of this objective would be an increase in the number of JSRCC students applying for transfer to the target university. Requests for transcripts to be sent to this university in March, April and May of this year have increased by 25% over the number of requests received during the same period last year.

The final activity planned for both halves of our program is a critique meeting scheduled in late June at which time alumni volunteers in both parts of the program as well as city school teachers, current students, and admissions counselors from the target senior institution will provide us with their opinions of how the program has functioned and how it can be improved. Information from this session will be included in our final report.

Changes in Program, Resource Allocation and Staff

Aside from delays in the initiation of our project and resulting schedule alternations, there have been no substantial changes in the activities outlined in the proposal, nor in resource allocation or staffing. Institutional commitments, in the form of released time for a faculty member involved in making high school presentations, as well as the percentage of time devoted to the project by the Dean of Students and Alumni Director have been met or exceeded. The whole College, including the Local Board, has found this an exciting and immediately rewarding undertaking. In addition to the data services and publicity efforts identified as a College contribution in the proposal, many parts of the College, especially the Office of Planning and Institutional Research and the Division Chairmen of the Downtown Campus have become involved at a much more active level than we anticipated.

Plans to Institutionalize UCCTOP Progress

The UCCTOP proposal presented by J. Sargeant Reynolds identified plans for institutionalizing the project through the use of locally controlled non-state funds and the momentum of a growing alumni organization. Dr. Burnette, the College's president, is so pleased with the success of the program that he has committed JSRCC to continuing these transfer outreach efforts through whatever local funds are available. The response of our alumni is difficult to overstate. Those who have been involved in the program this year have already indicated an interest in participating next year, and in fact are pressing us to commit ourselves to dates and times. A request for additional alumni volunteers was included in the spring survey of the college's 18,000 member Alumni Association and the response to that questionnaire, while not yet

complete, has been strong. Furthermore, alumni attending colleges other than the target university (especially those at Virginia State University, an historically black college in neighboring Petersburg) have expressed an interest in establishing alumni networks on other campuses.

Several facets of this year's efforts promise to strengthen the institutionalization of the program. The identification of high school students interested in entering our transfer programs will make it possible for us to follow the academic careers of these students and assist them individually in their application for entry into the college's transfer programs. With the continued cooperation of the target university, we will ultimately be able to track the progress of transfer students from city high schools through JSRCC and on through their careers at the receiving senior institution. This will further strengthen our pool of alumni volunteers. And the willingness of the university admissions staff to continue applications workshops on our campus with immediate acceptance of transfer applications will of course also further support the College's efforts.

The UCCTOP project has caught the attention of three additional groups outside the College whose desire to participate will support future efforts here. The Richmond city school system maintains a team of financial aid specialists whose responsibility is to assist city high school students complete federal financial aid applications. This team has asked to accompany us on future visits to high school classes, and will be available to provide follow-up assistance to interested students. The College has also become actively involved with the Richmond Area Program for Minorities in Engineering--the local chapter of a national organization which seeks to prepare minority and female high school students for entry into engineering curricula--and this

chapter is eager to work with us to extend our transfer support efforts to include students interested in our transfer engineering program.

Finally, the College's UCCTOP outreach efforts and Ford funding have been of considerable interest to the CSX Corporation, a company which recently located its headquarters in Richmond and which has a major commitment to the development of the inner city. This spring CSX made a $10,000 grant to JSRCC to challange our alumni in their first fundraising campaign, based in part on the corporation's approval of the outreach efforts made by alumni volunteers. We are pleased to report that the first scholarship award using these funds has been made to a business administration transfer student on our Downtown Campus.

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AUG 8 1985